



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE RELATION OF THE HOME TO THE SCHOOL

CORA HAMILTON

Training Teacher, Macomb Normal School

There are many definitions of education, each of which embodies the fulfilment of some need of the human soul. The varying opinions as to what life is, and is to be, leads to changing emphasis on what is important in education. Each group of people having common interests has a common ideal as to what the members of the community ought to become. This ideal growing out of the needs, experiences, and ideals of the group will be practically realized in exact ratio to the pressure of necessity. Since the group constantly enlarges its experiences and feels new needs, education has been a constantly progressive process. Education from this view-point becomes the socialization of the child. The uneducated child is a bundle of natural tendencies which constantly seek expression without reference to the rights or comforts of others. Education seeks to supply knowledge by which the conditions of life without the individual may be interpreted, and also to build up such habits of conduct and tendencies to behavior as shall best serve the needs of the group to which he is directly connected and the race with which he may at any time build up living relations.

In the beginning each family attended to the socialization of each of its members. When the group-idea became emphasized and duties multiplied as new relations were assumed, it became necessary for the home to delegate its power to some one individual who should perform for all the children of the group those duties which the family had heretofore performed for itself. Hence in the inception the school was a simple extension of the home. However complex and formal the administration of the school has become, its relation to the home has never changed. The teacher still, in legal phrase, is *in loco parentis*.

It is only too common to place the whole responsibility for

education upon the school, forgetting that it is only another phase of home life, and that while its sole purpose of existence is the socialization of the child, indirect influences, such as the industrial and political life of the community, its amusements, traditions, religion, and standards of morals and intelligence, are powerful enough to modify, and sometimes to counteract, all that the school can do. The home, therefore, must share the responsibility at least equally. The school has contact with the child one-third its waking hours, the home or community two-thirds. The stimuli received in the one-third the time will become evanescent unless the home offers some practical outlet for its application. It must be reinforced and supplemented in active living. This is all the more necessary since the group-ideals are sometimes narrow or mistaken and weakness exists in the school itself.

Since the school is organized to do the work properly belonging to the parents, the *first* necessity is personal contact between the parents and the school. It is most lamentably true that the major portion of the schools of Illinois are struggling to discharge their duty in socializing the children without the fundamental aid. The reasons for the lack of this contact are various. Some parents fear that their visits will be an intrusion. The teachers are strangers and they feel the same diffidence about going into the room that they would in calling on a stranger in any other place. The teacher need not be a stranger. I never refused an invitation to tea in the home of a pupil in my life. On the contrary, some of the dearest memories of my life cluster about the days spent in homes, sometimes elegant, sometimes very humble, where some mother who loved her children desired to know what sort of a woman had her child six hours a day and measured out in some degree the man that future days were to see. Again, some parents have no adequate conception of the meaning and purpose of human life. Spiritually they are blind, and look only toward the material things of life. Hence, education is purely something to be gone through with as a matter of habit. Social relationship and duties are ignored and efforts to socialize the child are met either with indifference or open ridicule. This is often quite as true of the well-to-do American

parents as it is of the hard-worked and ignorant foreigners. A third class make no effort to establish personal contact because they believe education is the teacher's business for which they pay her a good salary, and she ought to attend to it. They really want their children educated and judge the progress they are making by such desultory tests as it occurs to them to make. Some parents feel their own ignorance of matter and method so keenly that they dread contact with the teacher lest they might be humiliated in the presence of their children.

On the other hand, some schools show very plainly that they do not want visitors. Sometimes their reasons are good. Some parents who have made no study of the progress of method in school have the old conventional idea of what a school ought to do, and discourage all attempts to make education *life*, instead of bare acquisition of facts. They are apt to discuss the methods of the school contemptuously in the presence of the pupil and so counteract all the teacher's efforts, unless the teacher can obtain a supremacy in trust and affection in the heart of the child, which is always an unnatural and pitiable thing. Again, some mothers idolizing the child at home, centering all family life around him, can never consider this child as a member of the community, and therefore demand special rights and privileges for the individual. This tends to de-socialize and defeat the very purpose of the school. Again, some few parents are absolutely meddlesome. So long as there is human nature, so long there will be people who delight in interesting themselves in other people's business even to usurping the rights of the school-teacher. Such people are the terror and despair of the teacher when they come to visit. There exists in my memory a picture of one visitor whose influence was felt for days afterward; who always humiliated me in some not-to-be-guarded-against way, and made me feel to the utmost that I *was* her *hired* servant and hardly worth my pay.

On the other hand, there are some teachers so lacking in social tact and self-control that while they are genuinely glad to see the visitor they have such unfortunate embarrassment of manner as to make the visitor feel awkward and unwelcome. Then, there is the teacher who *hates* visitors. She is doing poor work and

does not care to do better. Visitors might discover it and her position might be forfeited. There is also the vain teacher who likes to get up a show, and who discourages visitors unless she has some spectacle on hand. In summing up these reasons it would appear that the lack of personal contact is due to fault on both sides which can only be overcome by a clearer idea of the benefits to be derived from conference between the interested parties.

Through the personal contact of parent and school the health of the pupil may be guarded. Since the school is the extension of the home, it devolves upon parents to see that defects in lighting, heating, and ventilating are avoided or corrected. It is the business of the home to see that proper seats are provided to avoid malformation and disease from this cause alone. We, as teachers, know that some terrible things are allowed in the name of economy, but our protests do not come to the building committee with the force of a complaint from a father and a voter. No housekeeper can manage her house without a working equipment, but thousands of teachers are turned into a bare room with nothing but their bare hands with which to work the miracle of transforming children from what they are to what they may be. If it were the sentiment of the homes represented that the school should be properly equipped, no school board could longer neglect or refuse to see that all necessary books and apparatus were furnished.

If parents really felt the school as an extension of the home, then there would be no such thing as putting the responsibility of progress on the school instead of on individual effort. They would cease to become the advocate of the pupil against the school. They would no longer attempt to save the pupil from the righteous consequence of his own misdeeds. They would realize that there are different types of children, and that there can be no such thing in a real school as "treating all pupils alike." Their differing characteristics and needs must govern all requirements. The help given a struggling, stumbling child would be an absolute curse to the lazy, able child. Mothers who have from one to ten children, and find their hands and hearts full of care for

them, ought to have a deep sense of sympathy for her who handles all day in one cramped room forty-five to fifty children from as many different home environments.

The home in its present general relation to the school hinders its work in several ways. Too much work is often required of the growing child. The boy who gets up at three o'clock in the morning to deliver papers on his route till seven or after is in no condition to study after it. This is sometimes a necessity in family economy, but often an ambitious boy wants a little pocket money and is encouraged to get it in this way. On the contrary, I have in mind certain families where the pupils play *all* the time outside of school hours and have no duties or responsibilities to meet. They are so saturated with play that it is uppermost in their minds and supersedes all other interests. Again, the work of the school is interrupted and retarded by too many social diversions, and those of the wrong kind. I went recently to see a comedy, played by local talent, based on a wife's jealousy and a husband's lying attempt to shield himself. The moral was perhaps writ large to adults, but to the crowd of children from seven years to fourteen who witnessed it there were suggestions tending to lower their standard of life and of the eternal fitness of things, because they had no ground of experience from which to interpret the lesson of the play. My heart ached to put them to bed where they belonged, to tell them a story, sing them a song, and leave them to the sweet, youthful slumber that was their due. The dancing-school sometimes becomes the enemy of good, intellectual work. I believe in dancing for children as a form of physical exercise, but I object to the excitement, the formalism, and the suggestion of the ordinary dancing-class. We, as teachers, hail the advent of the gymnasium work in dancing for all children. There it becomes an ordinary school exercise.

Parents are awakening to the advantages of co-operation in many of the ways I have mentioned, but there is one great field practically untouched, and that is sympathetic knowledge of the course of study, its purposes and methods. Mothers have come to me again and again and have said: "I am humiliated in

the presence of my child when I have tried to help him in his home work. I do not know what you teach, nor understand why you do the things the child tells me of. I am losing the respect of my child as an intelligent leader." I know a teacher who has organized mothers' classes in the common subjects, teaching them what the children were to learn that year, the purpose and method of the work.

With your permission, I should like to make a general summary of the course of study from a teacher's view-point for two reasons—one, that I may show where the home may help in carrying forward the work in the several subjects; the other, that you may suggest to me points where the suggested work does not meet the practical ideals of life from the home standpoint.

There was a time when the three R's made up the scope of subject-matter in the schools. In schools of the old stamp arithmetic still holds a prominent place. It may be that the wave of commercialism and materialism now sweeping our country may be traced to this very emphasis. Since we think in words and express the major part of our thinking in the same medium, language becomes the keystone of the new course of study. The child who comes to us at six has acquired by imitation such a vocabulary of, and use in, English as satisfies the needs of his immediate social group. But in socializing the child we make him a citizen of the world, past and present, instead of remaining a member of his own limited group. So we tell him the old tales of Troy, the Wagner opera stories, the Greek and Norse myths, the history of great heroes and noted events. We ask him to tell the stories back to us, and then to make sure that the language, the life, the meaning of the story shall enter into living experience, we have the story put into dramatic form and played in the schoolroom. If the home would encourage the giving of these same plays in the home yard by the neighborhood group, great aid would be rendered. If a story-telling hour might be inaugurated where the children would be expected to tell the family stories learned at school, the interest in the work would rest on the basis of satisfying real needs. We encourage the expression of children's own little experiences in story form, helping them

introduce the dramatic elements that makes the story of each entertaining to all.

Believing that the feeling of rhythm helps the children in respect to thought and movement, we read to them as effectively as we can great poems full of rhythmic lilt and swing, even when they do not understand all the language. If on Sunday afternoon there might be an hour in the home when the child learns from the parent's reading the old Scotch version of the Psalms, it would mean power and joy in years to come.

History is the record of the life of man in contact with his fellow; literature is the record of the emotional and spiritual life of the race. The socialized child must have a knowledge of both these subjects, since until he knows how the race came to be, what it is, and how its standards and beliefs grew up, he can form no opinion as to what the future is to be or of his part in racial progress. Both these subjects are so great and the records so voluminous that the time spent with the teacher would be far too limited for such acquaintance with them as is an absolute necessity, so we teach the child to read to himself. Here the home should be our strongest ally. From the time the six-year-old can read anything, through to manhood, the home should see that proper subject-matter is provided and that some time every day is set apart definitely for reading. The boy who reads Cooper with his father won't sneak away to read "Bloody Dick, the Highwayman" in a barn with the boys. The child who reads much is laying up a great store of words, images, and convictions that become the materials of life in the future.

The child's relation to his environment is a never-ending source of interest to him. We call it geography, but it is no longer a formal study of the book. He studies the action of water upon the surface of the earth about him. The great physiographic fact of the leveling process going on all the time becomes a matter of real experience through which he interprets all similar action wherever it may take place. From a study of his own environment he passes to that of different children of the earth—Japanese, Eskimos, Indians, or Filipinos—interpreting each in the terms of his own experience. He watches the ther-

nometer, barometer, and wind-changes till he is able to predict weather with as much success as the great Foster or his contemporaries. The sources of all materials for the satisfaction of human needs—food, fuel, clothing, material for shelter, tools, raw materials for, and processes of, manufacture are investigated. The influence of physiography on production and trade is suggested by experience in their own community and forms a basis for interpreting all they hear or read of the other lands.

Nature-study is a phase of this same subject, and gives rise directly to the most reverent thoughts of the Creator and created, if rightly handled. We sorely need the help of the home in this phase of education. If there could only be an effort to lead conversation at home into geographical channels; if parents and children would read daily papers together in search of knowledge of people and countries; if each child might have a garden where experiments might go forward; if parents could only have patience with the living animals the child likes to own—then the school would find its work vastly supplemented.

Sometimes it is necessary to make a record of some fact or observation so that it may be referred to at a later time; therefore the child must learn to write. This he does by imitation and visualizing, but by no formal drill. The home may assist greatly by giving opportunities for necessary writing, such as letters, notes, invitations to playmates, etc.

It is, perhaps, in the realm of mathematics that we most need intelligent help from the parents. The old days are passing away and new ideals have arisen. Since the race developed its practical applications of mathematical fact rather late in its period of development and then in answer to absolute need, we contend that the child in the lower grades has no reason for studying formal arithmetic, and that mathematics as the schools have known it may safely be left to the fourth year of school life. In the meantime, the child is acquiring unconsciously a great many notions of measure, value, and content, which enable him to do in a year what he would otherwise do in four. The content of the formal work itself differs widely from what I was taught in my youth. It does not consist of a series of rules with lists of

problems to be solved by rule, but furnishes a problem—so conditions the child that he needs to solve it, and leads him through measurements and comparison to the result. The activities of play and of the manual-training shop furnish many of the problems. The home might furnish many more. Let the children help keep the family account book, having a duplicate of yours, if necessary. Plan a house beautiful with your children, and plan the furnishing, estimating all the costs. This is an example of the way in which the home may help in this subject. Believe me that the personal interest in these problems will give a stronger grip on the application of mathematical principles than any book problem could ever furnish.

History is also studied from an entirely new basis. The teacher sets up some problem in human life which the child endeavors to solve in the light of personal experience. When he has come to a conclusion he compares his solution with the actual facts as recorded by different authors. Individual reasoning is criticised, corrected, and enlarged in classwork with the teacher. As an illustration of what I mean, suppose the lesson to be taught is that of the resistance of the colonies to the tax laid by England, particularly on tea. Here were the tea ships in Boston Harbor determined to unload their cargo. Here were the colonists determined it should not be landed. What would you have done had you been a colonist? The children come to class with an opinion, which is there compared with historical record of what was really done. In this way the child comes to feel that these events were living things, participated in by people who were feeling and thinking intensely. Presently he begins to realize the relation of cause and effect and to see how the great movements of the race have contributed to the present state of civilization, and to feel himself a debtor to those who have struggled in the past to attain it. If the home would question the child daily as to what problems were under consideration and then add any personal touch of knowledge gained through experience or reading, the interest would be greatly enlarged.

On the art side of school-life we need help desperately. Music is one of the great factors for culture, but it is a very

barren thing if it does not pass over into the home life of the child. There ought to be an hour in the week when the child sings his lullaby song to the dear home baby and all his songs to the members of the family, no matter how stumbling the performance may be. I know one home where the father is a busy physician and a very undemonstrative man, but Sundays just at dusk his little daughter sings to him and plays a simple tune on her violin, while her mother plays a simple accompaniment, and when it is over the father ceremonially kisses his little daughter as thanks for the music. In the child's mind, it has almost become a sacrament. We teach color harmony and design in our drawing classes. Why should not children make plans for house decoration, plans for gowns, and a hundred other things in which the home could utilize the lessons of the school? In so simple a matter as making flower-pots decorative even the seven-year-old can help.

In the manual-training work, the home may set the aims. Does mother need a shelf, a table, a breadboard, a box, a hall lantern—indeed, a hundred things? A simple suggestion of size and purpose leads to the most effective work that can be done—work which satisfies a real need. In the domestic science work there will be failure unless the children may work out the lessons. Let the child set the table as he is taught and cook the potatoes, even if it is not done according to your most cherished ideals.

In summing up what I have tried to say about home co-operation in the course of study, you will see that I have tried to show that *education is life* rather than a preparation for living, and that it is only effective when that which is taught finds an outlet in the home. Finally, we depend on you to help us to maintain the tone of the school; to set high standards of thought and life, believing that we grow by “admiration, hope and love.”